

REMARKS

Claims 1-13 are pending in the present application. Claims 11-13 have been withdrawn from consideration. Claims 1 and 8 have been amended and claim 2 has been cancelled. Reconsideration of claims 1 and 3-10 in light of the amendments thereto and in view of the following remarks is respectfully requested.

Claim 1 has been rejected as anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,183,565 to Granneman. Claim 1 has been amended to recite an apparatus for supporting a thin, planar workpiece that includes a plenum in fluid communication with a gas supply and having a workpiece support flange. The workpiece support flange has an inner diameter slightly smaller than an outer diameter of the workpiece. An edge ring movably rests on the support flange and contacts an outer edge of the workpiece. The edge ring has an inner diameter slightly smaller than the outer diameter of the workpiece and an outer diameter slightly larger than an outer diameter of the workpiece. When the workpiece is placed on the support flange an outer edge of the workpiece rests upon the edge ring. When a workpiece is placed on the support flange and gas is supplied to the plenum the edge ring is lifted by the gas in contact with the outer edge of the workpiece. In this manner the inner diameter of the support flange coacts with an outer diameter of the edge ring to define a gas flow path through which the supplied gas flows when the edge ring and the workpiece are lifted from the support flange.

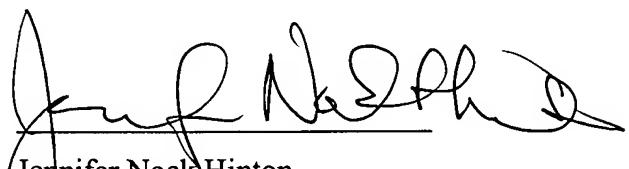
Granneman does not teach or suggest the apparatus recited in claim 1. For example, Granneman does not feature an edge ring that moveably rests on a support flange and is lifted and remains in contact with the workpiece when the workpiece is lifted by gas. Likewise, the features in WO 02/101806 to Strauch and JP 2002190715 to Okazaki that are cited as being edge rings do not moveably rest upon a support flange and float with the workpiece when it is lifted by gas. For these reasons, claim 1 and its dependant claims 3-7 are in condition for allowance.

Claim 8 has been rejected as anticipated by either Strauch or Okazaki. Claim 8 has been amended in a manner similar to claim 1 and is allowable for the same reasons stated above. Claim 8 and its dependant claims 9-10 are therefore in condition for allowance.

In view of the foregoing, claims 1 and 3-10 are now in condition for allowance. A response to the Amendment in the form of a Notice of Allowance is hereby solicited. Please deduct any payment deficiencies or credit any overpayments to Account No. 23-0630.

Respectfully submitted,

Date: 14 DE 05



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